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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#)1. U.S.-Israel Relations
- [1](#)2. Mideast
- [1](#)3. Iran

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Key stories in the media:  
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All media reported that PM Benjamin Netanyahu will meet President

Obama in the White House today. HaQaretz's banner -- QObama Showing Israel Who's Boss with Semi-Snub of Netanyahu in Washington -- emphasizes the newspaper's view of the upcoming meeting. The media reported that the President announced his willingness to meet with Netanyahu at the last moment. Israel Radio reported that DM Ehud Barak will meet with Defense Secretary Robert Gates and National Security Advisor James Jones.

The media cited President Obama's videotaped address that was shown at Saturday night's Tel Aviv rally marking the 14th anniversary of the late PM Yitzhak Rabin's assassination. Obama was quoted as saying "On that terrible November night, Yitzhak left us with his death. Now it is up to us to carry on its meaning, to carry on his work." The President cited the necessity of saying Qyes to peace, reassured the crowd that QAmerica's bond with our Israeli allies is unbreakable, and pledged that U.S. support for Israel's defense will never be undermined. Speaking at the demonstration, President Shimon Peres urged PA President Mahmoud Abbas to remain in office and to work with Israel on a peace agreement.

Yesterday HaQaretz reported that concerns are growing in Israel's Government over the possibility of a unilateral Palestinian declaration of independence within the 1967 borders, a move which could potentially be recognized by the U.N. Security Council. According to HaQaretz, Netanyahu recently asked the Obama administration to veto any such proposal, after reports reached Jerusalem of support for such a declaration from major EU countries, and apparently also certain U.S. officials. The reports indicated that Palestinian PM Salam Fayyad has reached a secret understanding with the Obama administration over U.S. recognition of an independent Palestinian state. Such recognition would likely transform any Israeli presence across the Green Line, even in Jerusalem, into an illegal incursion to which the Palestinians would be entitled to engage in measures of self-defense.

Addressing supporters during a rare visit to Bethlehem and Hebron, Abbas said that the Palestinians would not make any additional concessions and would continue to demand their rights. Leading Israeli media quoted him as saying: "I don't know what the Israelis want. They must start thinking about what needs to be done if they really want peace." The Jerusalem Post also reported that Hassan Khraisheh, deputy speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, called on Abbas to seriously consider dissolving the PA because of the failure of the peace process. Maariv quoted chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat as saying that he tried to arrange meetings with Uzi Arad, the Chairman of Israel's National Security Council, but that his efforts were repeatedly rejected.

HaQaretz reported that Palestinian sources told the newspaper that President Abbas said in private meetings in recent days that he intends to resign from his post in the near future. The remarks, which Abbas reportedly made to an Egyptian delegation, came after Thursday's announcement that he would not seek reelection as Palestinian president. HaQaretz and other media quoted U.S. officials as saying that they haven't given up on him and that they still see him as essential to the peace process. HaQaretz reported that top Palestinian officials predicted yesterday that if Abbas makes good on his declaration that he won't run in the upcoming Palestinian presidential election, Palestinian PM Salam Fayyad and his entire cabinet would resign, signaling the destruction of the PA. However, HaQaretz quoted sources close to Abbas as saying they expect him to retract his decision to quit politics if PM Netanyahu commits publicly to freezing settlement construction during final-status talks. HaQaretz wrote that as an alternative to such an Israeli commitment, Abbas is seeking a guarantee from President Obama that would explicitly mention cessation of Israeli construction in East Jerusalem.

Maariv revealed that Yitzhak Shapiro, the Rabbi of the Od Yosef Hai Yeshiva in the militant settlement of Yitzhar, has written a book describing when a Jew is allowed to harm Qgoys [foreigners] and their children.

The media quoted the Turkish state-run news agency Anatolian as saying yesterday Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan denied that Omar Hassan al-Bashir was responsible for genocide in Darfur and said he would be more comfortable talking to the indicted Sudanese President than to PM Netanyahu. Erdogan was quoted as saying: "I wouldn't be

able to speak with Netanyahu so comfortably but I would speak comfortably with Bashir. I say comfortably: QWhat you've done is wrong. And I would say it to his face. Why? Because a Muslim couldn't do such things. A Muslim could not commit genocide.

All media reported that yesterday, during a press conference in Tel Aviv, Kadima Knesset Member and former Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz publicly presented his peace plan. Mofaz called for talks with Hamas, if the latter chooses and wants to sit at the negotiating table.

HaQaretz quoted the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Michael Mullen, as saying last week in Washington that a nuclear Iran would pose an existential threat to Israel.

The Jerusalem Post reported that U.S. House of Representatives Minority Whip Eric Cantor told the newspaper that the climate toward Israel on Capitol Hill could be changing. In an unrelated matter, The Jerusalem Post reported that Senator Joe Lieberman (Ind.-CT) informed Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat that six senators had sponsored a bill that would put an end to a currently needed presidential confirmation on initiatives to recognize Jerusalem as the Qundivided capital of IsraelQ and call to move the U.S. embassy there, and implement the 1995 Jerusalem Embassy Act.

The media reported that a formal split in the Labor Party was pushed off for now, after Knesset Member Daniel Ben Simon refused to join the four party "rebels" in launching a new faction despite attending the conference they held yesterday. By law, Knesset members can only split off and be recognized as a new faction if they comprise at least one-third of their former party's representatives. Since Labor has 13 MKs, that means five are needed for a split.

HaQaretz and other media reported on the opening of the Jenin Cinematheque in four months in the historic building that housed a movie theater from the 1950Qs through the first Intifada in 1987.

The media reported on a public debate held last Thursday at Brandeis University between jurist Richard Goldstone, who headed the U.N. Human Rights Council-mandated commission of investigation into Operation Cast Lead, and former Israeli Ambassador to the U.S., Dr. Dore Gold. Yesterday Maariv reported that Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi has decided to appoint Brig. Gen. Yuval Halamish as the figure responsible for coordinating the IDFQs inquiries concerning the Goldstone Report.

HaQaretz reported that two academics who authored the military's ethical code in 1992 -- Prof. Moshe Halbertal and Prof. Avi Sagi -- are now calling on Israel to investigate some of the claims raised in the Goldstone Report over Operation Cast Lead. While the scholars level harsh criticism at the report, they believe there is no alternative to probing several specific conclusions contained in it. Last week Halbertal authored an article entitled "The Goldstone Illusion" in the U.S. magazine The New Republic, and Sagi posted an article on the Web site of Jerusalem's Shalom Hartman Institute. Both pieces called on Israel to examine some of the findings of the report, flawed though they believe it is.

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## 1. U.S.-Israel Relations:

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### Block Quotes:

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## I. QA Relationship in Crisis

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of the

independent, left-leaning HaQaretz (11/9): QRelations between Israel and the United States are in crisis. This is the conclusion that stems from the difficulty in arranging a meeting between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Barack Obama. The White House wanted Netanyahu to sweat before being granted an audience with the president, and wanted everyone to see him perspire.... The relations are not symmetrical. Netanyahu may be an experienced diplomat and politician, and Obama may be a novice, but Obama is the president of a superpower, and Netanyahu represents a small country that depends greatly on the United States. It sometimes appears that Netanyahu forgets this, and pretends he is the head of a superpower.... The opaqueness of the administration rallied Israeli public opinion behind Netanyahu, instead of creating domestic divisions. But even when the President is not being nice, he is still stronger in the relationship. Instead of making excuses and explaining the terrible situation, Netanyahu should make the effort to resolve the crisis with the American administration. He should listen to the American complaints which sound like the gripes of a couple married for 30 years. Israel complains about the absence of intimacy but only takes and does not give anything in return.

## II. QObama Has No Idea

Columnist Shmuel Rosner, who was HaQaretzQs correspondent in Washington, wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (11/9): QIn his awkward choice to speak at the [Rabin commemoration] rally ... [Obama] stormed the public square with yesterdayQs messages, yesterdayQs legacy. He had good intentions.... The speech per se was fair if not exciting. The choice of venue revealed how hard the incumbent Democratic administration finds it to digest the fact that between [Bill] ClintonQs eight years and ObamaQs four, there also were George BushQs years.... Obama may get one or two points for his efforts, but, substantially, on Saturday he gained less than one point of support in Israeli public opinion -- perhaps even the other way around.

### 12. Mideast:

### Block Quotes:

## 1I. QWashington Chill

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (11/9): QFrom Eisenhower to Bush II, past administrations have intermittently cold-shouldered Israel or sought to drive a wedge between the Jewish state and its supporters in the United States. In this regard, the Obama administration is breaking no new ground. Nevertheless, if Obama buys into the insidious canard, as Thomas Friedman promotes it, that the Palestinian leadership Qwants a deal with Israel without any negotiationsQ while Israel's leadership Qwants negotiations with the Palestinians without any deal,Q he will invariably spend the remainder of his term veering from one dead end to another. Through a multitude of blunders -- failure to dismantle illegal outposts among them -- successive Israeli governments have empowered the West Bank Palestinian leadership to frame the current stalemate as resulting from Israel's preference for settlements over peace. In reality, it is persistent Palestinian intransigence combined with the fragmentation of their polity that has made progress impossible. No one wants peace more than Israel. Most Israelis support a demilitarized Palestine living side-by-side with the Jewish state of Israel -- the very vision articulated by Netanyahu in his seminal June 14 Bar-Ilan [University] address.

## II. QA Peace that No One Wants

Political commentator Shalom Yerushalmi wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (11/9): QNothing will come of this trip by the Prime Minister and Defense Minister to Washington. Benjamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak do not believe in the peace process and want to obstruct it. Netanyahu envisions the Palestinian state to which he committed himself in the Bar Ilan speech last June. His greatest nightmare is to see it materializing.... Minister Barak,

who joined the government in order to lead the peace process, still bears the trauma of his encounter with Yasser Arafat at Camp David, and as a result has despaired of any chance of reaching an agreement.... President Shimon Peres was quoted yesterday as saying that Netanyahu and Barak had injured Abu Mazen. It is difficult to exempt the Palestinian President from responsibility for the stalled negotiations. Abu Mazen is posing as an unfortunate and playing on the thin line between QwillingQ and Qable.Q Even if he is willing, he is unable to reach a solution or even conduct serious negotiations that entail concessions during a PA election period or in general. It is also difficult to understand why he abandoned the discussion room after Ehud Olmert offered him almost everything, and why he does not leverage what he was promised in order to move forward. U.S. President Obama is a partner to this general travesty of peace. A year ago, he committed himself to bring about a solution to the conflict within two years, but since then he has not succeeded in advancing the negotiations by a single millimeter. Even the small-scale deal that the Americans tried to devise, a settlement freeze in exchange for nickel-and-dime normalization and flights to India through Saudi Arabia, did not work. It is interesting to consider how the President wants to advance peace quickly, if he evades meeting the prime minister when he comes to Washington? Perhaps he too has already given up.

### III. QWhat Abu Mazen Deserves

Dov Weisglass, who was former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's top diplomatic advisor, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (11/8): Q[Palestinian President Mahmoud AbbasQ] strange way of coping with his troubles ought not to distract us from the truly troubling matter: the growing sense among the Palestinians that Israel is not interested in reaching a political resolution of the conflict. That is to say that even if the resignation is phony, the despair and loss of faith are real.... It is possible that a partial construction freeze would have satisfied the Palestinians, but ObamaQs demand for an absolute settlement construction freeze created a problem. Now that the Americans have publicly backpedaled away from that demand, the Palestinians feel cheated, and their faith in the United StatesQ ability to influence and to mediate has been lost.... At the beginning of this decade, when the rampage of Palestinian terrorism was at its peak, IsraelQs fundamental condition for negotiations was a cessation of terrorism and violence. The current Palestinian government has delivered those goods. It behooves Israel, as such, to make every effort to ensure the continued existence of that government. The Israeli government needs to go out of its way to resolve the crisis with Abu Mazen swiftly. We must not reach a situation in which there is no fire -- but no negotiations either. The worst of all will be if the Palestinians come to believe that a sincere effort to eradicate terrorism does nothing to change IsraelQs position, and that no political progress will ever be made in any event. What do we stand to lose, they will ask themselves in that case, by renewing terror attacks?

### IV. QLet Him Go

Professor Eyal Zisser, the Chairman of the Department of Middle Eastern History at Tel Aviv University, wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (11/8): QSurprisingly enough, the reaction to Abu MazenQs statement -- both from the Palestinian street and the PLO, as well as in Israel and the United States -- was one of indifference, a reaction he has earned himself. Abu Mazen is an affable man who rejects violence and terrorism. That is despite the fact that anyone who really knows his positions knows that the disparity between his world view and that of Yasser Arafat is not as great as one might otherwise assume. And indeed, the Palestinians do not need an affable grandfather, but a determined leader. After all, Abu Mazen lost Gaza to Hamas and is hard put to enforce his will on the West Bank. Nor has he been truly capable of advancing the negotiations with Israel, regardless of who the prime minister of Israel is. As such, it would be better -- for the Palestinians, Israel and the U.S. -- to let Abu Mazen go. And then it will become evident whether a new and determined, daring and decisive leader will emerge from the younger generation of Palestinians, a leader who will be able to lead them forward, or whether it will become evident, once again, that they wonQt miss the opportunity to squander the chance of closing ranks and producing from their midst an effective leadership that will lead them to safety and to an end

of the conflict with Israel.

#### IV. QThe Israeli Perversion

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in Ha'aretz (11/9): QWe are being assuaged and told that nothing will affect the good-old status quo. We are promised that [Mahmoud] Abbas will cancel elections and will continue serving the occupation until his final days. At the same time, we rally our perversion against the [Salam] Fayyad initiative to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state. The option has been and remains one of the following: two states for two peoples along the 1967 borders; or one state, in which two peoples continue to make each other miserable. Israel is galloping toward this latter disaster with eyes wide shut.

#### 3. Iran:

Block Quotes:

#### QAn Imprudent Missile Umbrella

Avigdor Haselkorn, the author of QThe Continuing Storm: Iraq, Poisonous Weapons, and Deterrence,Q wrote in the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz (11/9): QBy conducting the [current Juniper Cobra] defense drill, Israel and the United States are implicitly recognizing that a nuclear-armed Iran is a fait accompli.... [Furthermore,] the drill fosters an undue reliance on the defense commitment of a foreign power, not to mention the effectiveness of its antiballistic-missile technology. In this regard, past lessons should not be forgotten.... The net result of [IsraelQs] forced restraint [during the 1991 Gulf War] was a severe blow to Israeli strategic deterrence.... While Israel views the exercise largely as a signal to Iran, Washington wants the drill to further tie down Israel's hands so it does not act unilaterally to preempt Tehran's nuclear gambit.... Finally, and most important, the size and scope of the exercise are undoubtedly linked to the overall concept pronounced this past July by the United States, which envisions extending an American Qdefensive umbrellaQ over the Middle East if Iran goes nuclear. There should be little doubt in Jerusalem that in due course the Obama administration will use the umbrella argument to pressure Israel into disarming its reported Qbomb-in-the-basementQ posture and giving up its option of last resort. Yet, paradoxically, the U.S. umbrella solution would allow Iran to go nuclear while an Israeli preemption is blocked under the pretext that the U.S. defense guarantee would deter the Iranians, or failing this, beat back any attack. It is incomprehensible that Israel is taking part in this scheme.

CUNNINGHAM